

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE WILLIAM J. PERRY
 PRESS CONFERENCE, WITH REP. DONALD PAYNE, AFTER TRIP TO UGANDA, RWANDA,
 AND ZAIRE
 ANDREWS AIR FORCE BASE, MD
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SEC. PERRY: Good morning. Congressman Donald Payne and I have just returned from our trip to Uganda, Rwanda and to the Goma refugee camp in Zaire. We went along with Ambassador Moose, who is still in Rwanda, General Joulwan, General Schroeder and General Nix who are still at their posts now, with Nan Bolton (sp) from the Agency for International Development, and Julia Taft, who is the president of Interaction, which is an organization which coordinates non-governmental relief operations.

Our visit at Goma was truly heartbreaking to see the human misery and deprivation at the refugee site. On the other hand, it was truly inspiring to see how the human spirit can rise above adversity and to see the outpouring of volunteers to provide the relief for that desperate situation.

This is a human tragedy of enormous proportions. There are approximately four million refugees and displaced persons needing assistance -- one million alone in the camp at Goma. There have been 3,000 people a day dying most of the days last week.

In order to deal with this immediate emergency, a vast logistics effort, including airlift, was needed, and only the U.S. military had that capability. Therefore, 10 days ago the president directed that the Defense Department assist this relief operation. We began the flow of equipment and supplies the next day, focusing on what were identified as

the most urgent problems; providing pure water, medicine, site sanitation, and building up the infrastructure, in particular increasing the capacity of the airfield at Goma. This has already been effective, has saved thousands of lives.

Last week the refugees were drinking the water from a polluted lake; the streets of Goma were littered with corpses who died from the cholera as a result of drinking the impure water. Yesterday we saw hundreds of refugees on those same streets carrying water buckets on their head returning from the water purification site which is now operating.

Americans can be proud of the role that their military has played in this humanitarian effort. I can tell you I was proud to be the secretary of defense and to see the way our military was performing. We are also supporting a larger international effort there, international relief effort. For example, in the water purification effort, one of the units was supplied by the Germans. The Finns have supplied water takers to carry the water.

The San Francisco Fire Department, two days after the president made his announcement, offered to provide their water purification system which was used for emergency disaster relief in San Francisco. We got a C-5, picked up that water purification unit in San Francisco and flew it non-stop to Goma, Zaire. That is now operating and is providing fresh water for the people there. They not only provided the water purification equipment but they provided a retired fire chief, Frank Blackburn (sp), to help us in operating it and in the entire water purification operation. It was a real gratification for me to see our young Major Hansen (sp) and this retired Frank Blackburn (sp), this retired fire chief, working together in a volunteer spirit to solve this problem.

We now have the capacity to produce a million gallons a day of pure water in Goma. There are still problems, however, in distribution and identified the biggest problem in getting the water to the refugees now was

improving the distribution system and, therefore we, on the spot, authorized as a top priority getting water tankers moved in. And already yesterday the first wave of water tankers arrived and more are due to arrive today. So as a result of that, I truly believe we have turned the corner in that desperate situation in Goma, but we're still not moving fast enough. The aircraft and supplies are available, but there's a bottleneck at the Goma airport, and therefore, the president authorized the opening of the Kigali airport. That was authorized Saturday morning Rwanda time, and by Sunday morning when we arrived, the tactical air traffic control was already in and being operated by the Air Force, and already five transport aircraft had landed, including one C-5. This will more than double the flow of supplies to Goma because there is a paved road about 100 miles in duration, 100 miles in length from Kigali to Goma. This is why I believe we have turned the corner, both the bringing up the water purification system and now, with the opening of the Kigali airport, the providing of greatly increased throughput of materials.

While on this trip, which I took to get a first-hand assessment of the problem, I talked with the leaders of Uganda and Rwanda, including the president, the foreign minister and the defense minister. I gave them a message from the president, and I will return a message from the president to them. I talked with the armed military leaders who are responsible for this operation. Indeed, they were with me through the entire trip. I had a chance to talk with our troops who are working there in very desperate and difficult, frustrating conditions. I gave them my personal thanks and I passed on to them indeed the thanks of the nation for what they are doing. I talked to the United Nations, including Mrs. Ogata, who is the head of the UNHCR. I met with the French minister of defense, who was there on a similar mission, and I talked with the local leaders.

This is a team effort, and it's going to require all of these people pulling together in order to make it work.

The situation, therefore, is much more hopeful today, but it will be a long-term effort by these relief organizations that are there. The

U.S. role is one of providing humanitarian relief. We're providing that special logistics capability which we have to assist these relief organizations. It's going to be crucial in these next few weeks because we are the only ones that have this airlift capability that's necessary to provide quick relief. We expect, though, in the weeks to come that we will be phasing this operation over to the relief organizations as their supplies and equipment start to arrive through more normal transportation, through ship transportation and overland.

I want to emphasize to you that what we are doing is a humanitarian operation and not a peacekeeping operation. While I was there, I did meet with General Delair (sp), who is the commander of the U.N. — the so-called UNAMIR, the U.N. peacekeeping force in Rwanda. He expects to have a force of over 4,000 peacekeeping troops set up within a few weeks. We care very much about peacekeeping in Rwanda. We want to see the UNAMIR succeed. Our way the United States will support that operation, by providing airlift support to help move the troops in. We will not be providing troops of our own for that operation.

Let me now turn it over to Congressman Payne and ask him to make some additional comments.

REP. PAYNE: Thank you very much, Mr. Secretary. Let me, first of all, say how pleased I was 10 days ago when President Clinton committed the United States military and our financial resources to respond to the problem in Rwanda. I would like to also commend our secretary of defense for taking a firsthand view by going over to assess the situation, evaluate it, meet with leaders in the region, and to come back to report to the president about his assessment. I think that's the kind of action that really make Americans proud.

Thirdly, I'd like to certainly say, as he did, in echo how proud I am of our U.S. military. The young men there who were on the ground in very difficult situations made us all proud as they were changing the quality of life which was so bare, but they were in the process of purifying water, of providing relief assistance to the people in that region that it makes us real proud to be Americans and to see our

young men and women really step up to the plate and do such an outstanding job.

I think that, as the number one and the only major power left in the world, that there will be catastrophes that we will be required to respond to. There will be natural disasters, and there will be those that are man-made. In both instances, I think that we will have an obligation to respond in situations that are catastrophic in nature. The situation in Rwanda and Zaire is catastrophic in its nature, and I will certainly urge my colleagues in the Congress to support the appropriations that are being requested.

I believe that we are doing the right thing. I think that we will be moving into a new international order that will have to be sorted out through the use of multilateral international organizations such as the United Nations, but we will, as the leading power in the world, be asked in many instances to take the lead. And I commend once again our secretary for his firsthand assessment and look forward to meeting with the leaders of the House and Senate tomorrow morning to report, with the secretary, to them our findings and to work through our appropriations necessities in the near future.

Thank you very much.

SEC. PERRY: You may direct your questions to either Congressman Payne or myself or Julia Taft from Interaction or Nan Bolton (sp) from the Agency for International Development.

Q: (Off mike) -- you said that could swell to 4,000 by the end of this week. Have you changed that estimate, and will the 200 troops in Kigali, Rwanda now be increased?

SEC. PERRY: Our original estimate is that this relief assistance operation could take up to 4,000 troops, total, in all areas of the region. General Joulwan, when I met with him yesterday, thought that that number -- that the job could probably be done with 3000 or less. As we speak we have 1,200 people involved in that operation. In round figures, 200 at Goma, 200 at Kigali -- that's anticipating a little bit -- 400 at Entebbe, and 400 in other locations, including Mombasa. That's what the 1,200 consists of. The number's going to go beyond 1,200 -- I think 3,000 is probably the max that it's likely to go to. We will do the job with as

few people as possible, given the nature of the mission, and as the days go on we'll get a much more precise picture of how many people are necessary.

Q: Secretary Perry, are you still considering using U.S. troops -- I'm sorry -- are you still considering using U.S. troops to man the way stations, or is it your preference now for relief workers or other agencies to do so?

SEC. PERRY: Our operation in Rwanda is going to be limited to manning the aircraft logistics operation, and so our troops in Rwanda will be in Kigali at the Kigali airport. We -- I had very good discussions with the U.N. and some of the relief people about the way stations and they are busy setting up the way stations right now. They are doing -- they will be doing that with volunteers and with other nation's support. Our support to the way stations will be limited to logistics support. So we will not be manning the way stations in particular.

Q: Mr. Secretary, are there any conditions in Rwanda under which American forces there would be drawn into action to protect people against a renewed threat of genocide?

SEC. PERRY: It is certainly conceivable that there are situations in Rwanda which will require the use of peacekeeping troops to keep the peace there. That's what the UNAMIR force is there to do. The United States will not have troops in UNAMIR. Our mission in Rwanda is limited -- will be limited to the relief operation in Kigali, and the only people we have there besides the ones necessary to run that air traffic control and the loading and off-loading of supplies will be a MP company which is there to help protect our own personnel.

Q: But would the -- (inaudible word) -- forces really stand by and watch people being slaughtered, as they have been --

SEC. PERRY: I believe I've answered that question already. Next question?

Q: Haiti's leaders have declared a state of siege. Are you increasingly concerned about the safety of Americans there, and do you think this requires you to speed up planning for an invasion?

SEC. PERRY: Could you repeat the

question? I couldn't hear all of it in the noise.

Q: Haiti's leaders have declared a state of siege. Are you increasingly concerned about the safety of Americans there, and do you believe this requires you to speed up planning for an invasion?

SEC. PERRY: We have detailed and very capable plans for an emergency evacuation which we can enact if that turns out to be necessary.

Q: Is the safety of Americans jeopardized now since Haiti has taken this step?

SEC. PERRY: We watch that issue every day, and as I said, if we believe that the Americans are in safety there — are in danger there, their lives are in danger, we will call for an emergency evacuation, and we have the resources to carry that out.

Q: Does the U.N. resolution increase the chances of a U.S. invasion?

SEC. PERRY: Pardon me?

Q: Does the U.N. resolution increase the chances that there will be a U.S.-led invasion of Haiti?

SEC. PERRY: The invasion of Haiti has always been an option open to the president. The U.N. resolution just supports that option.

There's a question in front of you.

Q: No, it was the same question.

SEC. PERRY: All right.

Q: How about Bosnia, Mr. Secretary? The action taken by the contact group this weekend seemed kind of ambiguous. What is the message to the Bosnian Serbs there?

SEC. PERRY: That message is not fully delivered. The United Nations has yet to act on that resolution, and we'll have to see the speed with which they act and the significance of the additional sanctions imposed. That's an ongoing — that's an ongoing drama. We do not have the full story on that yet.

Q: Is there anybody who would like to ask a question to Mrs. Taft here? Let me introduce Julia Taft.

MS. TAFT: Thank you.

I was just saying over to the aide that I wanted to have one chance to say from the relief community and the international humanitarian community, two weeks ago we were in Goma facing a bloc of a million people marching to a death march with nothing. One week ago, those people started dying all over

the roadside. This last weekend, when the air traffic flow started going and the water started being developed, there is life. And I from the relief community want to thank very much the role of the military in doing those things which we could never do, totally overwhelmed in providing that support. We've got a lot to do in the future, and there's still going to be a lot of troubles, but we think that the conditions in Rwanda will be conducive for people going back soon. Our agencies are working on these way stations, and we're looking at the confidence-building factor of the military being in Kigali as helpful. But basically what's going to make the difference is when the relief agencies and the U.N. have way stations throughout the countryside and can show the people in Zaire that they can come back.

So I just wanted to say that and maybe you all have any questions.

Q: I assume there are plans for humanitarian relief in Haiti in the event that an invasion takes place and humanitarian relief is needed there.

MS. TAFT: We have many agencies that have been providing on an ongoing basis both development and relief activities. As you know, CARE is feeding about 500,000 people; we've got a number of agencies that have been there and have augmented their programs, are ready to expand if necessary. Basically, the focus in recent — this past week has been in getting relief personnel onto Guantanamo to be part of the counseling and the review system there so that people are not being forcibly repatriated back to Haiti and that in fact those that are chosen to stay in asylum are going to be taken care of. This is something that we do — we're doing the social services of. But in terms of the Haiti, there's a lot of looking at that, but it seems to not be the number-one problem.

Q: (Off mike) — one quick question for you. There's been a lot of concern in Congress that the relief operation in Rwanda could follow a Somalia scenario. What's your impression now, and what will you be able to do to assure your colleagues that that won't be the case?

REP. PAYNE: Well as someone as a member of the Africa subcommittee, I

followed both the Somalia situation very closely and this situation also. The Somalia situation was somewhat different because in Somalia there was not a government. The U.S. was there in a Chapter 7 operation. In Rwanda, there is a government. In Rwanda, there is a government -- coalition government made up -- as a matter of fact, the president is a Hutu and the prime minister also. And the government of Rwanda wants the people to return. The government of Rwanda -- the president, when we met with him, assured us that their government would protect people as they returned, that there would not be retaliation, that they actually were looking for the international community to come up with a system to deal with those leaders who created the genocide before the new government came into place.

And so there is a feeling that I received from the new government that they want to assure people that they will be safe, that they are doing everything within their power to provide safety, and that they said that the United States and U.N. are welcome here. There is a government. And so I see a vast difference from the situation in Rwanda than it was in the Somalia situation.

I was one who was critical of the slowness that the world was moving to deal with the Rwanda situation. As I indicated earlier,

though, I really commend the president with his recent action and the secretary with the swiftness that we have actually moved in to alter -- seriously alter that situation.

SEC. PERRY: Thank you, Congressman Payne.

Q: (Off mike.)

REP. PAYNE: I think that the new government was a part of the Arusha Accord. As you know, the Arusha Accord was an agreement that was worked out with the previous government to have power-sharing with the exiled Tutsis to come back into the government. I think the new government wants to continue the principles of the Arusha Accord. I do believe that there were a group of people who wanted to keep power, that it was originally not necessarily totally an ethnic problem, it was a problem of those in power not wanting to agree to the new accords that would share power. I think that it then turned into a genocidal thing after it got moving.

But I do believe that this new government is sincere. They need to rebuild a nation. Half of the nation is displaced or out of the country. They feel it's time for reconciliation. They're looking for support to help them do that. And I believe that that's their goal.

SEC. PERRY: Thank you. Thank you. We have to go on to other things now.

Thank you, Congressman Payne, Julia Taft and Nan Bolton.